

**Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC**  
**11<sup>th</sup> December 2014**  
**“Advent - Mary”**

*A narrated version of the PowerPoint presentation of this talk can be seen here:*  
[http://youtu.be/sJoMJ\\_dmYZU](http://youtu.be/sJoMJ_dmYZU)

**Reading: Matthew 1:18-25**

In the 1985 film “Back to the Future” a teenager, Marty, is sent back in time to 1955. He meets his future parents in High School, but has to go back again in time to repair the damage he has done when he stopped his parents meeting and so changed history. He has to make his parents meet back in history again, or else he and his family will no longer exist. In the scene I am about to show, Marty is stuck in 1955 and with the help of the scientist “Doc” who would later create a time machine, they are trying to get back to the future. But Doc tells him how important it is not to interfere with history.

*A clip from “Back to the Future” was shown.*

There are many films which have, as their plot, the idea of “what would have happened IF”. *During this next part a clip from “Sliding Doors” was shown.* In the 1998 film “Sliding Doors” the whole film alternates between two stories about the same woman – but each story is different depending upon whether or not she caught a train or missed it. It is a common theme in films, books and also in history. “What if ...” What if something happened differently. What if she did catch the train, what if she didn't? What if Marty in “Back to the Future” had changed history so that his parents never met and he was never born? What if Hitler had never been born?

Just over two thousand years ago, Mary, a young woman in Nazareth, was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel who told her that she was chosen, chosen to be the mother of the Lord. To be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah, the chosen one, to be Mother of God. It is a scene which has been painted, drawn and written about in many different ways all around the world. This moment when God put his plan into the hands of a young girl. One of my favourite images of it is near the ruins of St Paul's Church in Macau, Mary dressed in traditional Chinese clothing and Gabriel, the archangel, dressed like a dancer, handing her a Chinese Lilly. But in every scene, in every picture, the same fact remains. Mary had a choice.

Yes or no. She had a choice to agree to the call of God and to be the Mother of the Lord, or to say no. What would have happened if she had said no? Did God have a plan B? Perhaps not. Perhaps all of history and all the future relied on that one moment. A moment in which she said “yes,” in which she said “Be it unto me according to thy word.” In other words, she handed herself over to God, to do as God wanted. How different the world would be if she had said “No.” As we journey in this Advent season, this time of preparation for Christmas, to remember the birth of Jesus, remember that God also asks you to do something for him. What is he asking you? When you know, will you say “Yes” or “No” to God? And will that yes or no change history for the better, or for the worse?